

Police Serving as Deterrent Factor

There have been at least a dozen known cases of individuals – mostly minors – who have been deterred from the process of radicalization, and never mobilized (to date) due to interactions with law enforcement. All of these individuals had done enough to warrant the FBI to open cases on them, so there was a possibility of serious criminal repercussions. However, in all the cases they did not end up getting prosecuted and no legal action was eventually taken due to the intervention of police officers in the situation.

- A 15-year-old was attracted by anything anti-authoritarian, and eventually decided that he liked ISIS after coming across them on the Internet. This teenager was ultimately rebelling, and using ISIS as a way to do that. His activities online drew the attention of law enforcement, and prompted a police officer to visit his home. The officer showed up at the youth's house, described the situation to the parents, and questioned the youth about what websites he has been looking at. The very appearance of the police officer scared the youth and made him realize that this wasn't a joke, video game, or sport. This was real. The youth became intimidated by the threat of criminal charges and since his parents were informed, they also started to monitor his activities online. There was never any legal action taken and he was not arrested.
- A 16-year-old heard from friends that ISIS actually helps people in Syria and that the mainstream media is giving them a bad reputation. He was inspired to do something to help the Syrian people after seeing the atrocities on the Internet and believed ISIS was a pathway towards helping out. He was convinced by messages that the "Western media" couldn't be trusted, and ignored all the information about ISIS being a terrorist group, instead believing they were being prosecuted and attacked by the Western elites. In this case, the teen was naive and dumb and easily influenced by peers. A police officer visited his home and talked with him, in front of his mother. The officer brought some articles from individuals who escaped from Syria / ISIS and were describing the actual situation.¹ At the time of the discussion, the teenager was stubborn and nonresponsive, resisting the information being conveyed. However, after that intervention the mother continued to monitor the teen and to date has shown less interest in anything related to ISIS. No legal action was taken.
- A 15-year-old found out his friend was interested in joining ISIS and was influencing him to join him. This was a case of peer pressure. The police officer showed up at school

¹ The actual resources shared by the officer are unknown, but here are some examples:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-hidden-footage-reveals-reality-of-life-in-raqqa-a6928721.html>

<http://openyoureyes.net/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aM3EITvF52I>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2950469/It-s-not-like-YouTube-Former-ISIS-member-defected-terror-group-reveals-escaped-brutal-executions-Westerners-forced-out.html>

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/05/17/escape-from-isis-former-prisoners-tell-life-in-terror-armys-gulags.html>

because the teacher confiscated a paper where he doodled attack threats. The situation just got real! The youth became scared because the police were talking to him, and his parents were informed, which led to their heightened monitoring of who he hangs out with. No legal action was taken and the case did not proceed any further.

2) Recommended Lessons for Police:

The combination of being "scared straight" by the police plus getting the parents engaged (and maybe the parents helping to end relationships with like-minded extremist peers) has been shown to be effective in certain cases.

The police don't have to do anything special except be willing to engage the kid and the parents. If there are issues going on in the kid's life that clearly seem linked to why he is going down the bad path, it helps to make sure there's some kind of person/team there to help get the kid help or follow up after the police leave (i.e., principal/teachers/guidance counselor, social worker or psychologist, religious leader, etc.).

Police often don't need to do a whole big intervention effort....just making the kid aware that he's on their radar is sometimes enough. This might not work in every case, but it does sometimes, and in most cases the police have a good gut instinct of situations where the kid is a committed supporter (or a violent, antisocial kid), or perhaps been manipulated into radicalization – and might be influenced away from further proceeding down that path.

3) Examples of law enforcement using former extremists to intervene with at-risk youth.

Law enforcement/the AG in the Eastern District of NY are using a former ISIS recruit, an American nicknamed "Mo" for the story, in an intervention effort with a 15 yr. old boy. The story's really more about Mo (who you may have heard of) than the 15 yr. old, but it's a public example of how police are intervening and using a former extremist.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/former-isis-recruit-becomes-prosecutors-aide-1488898751>

4) Winning Trust of the Muslim Community

Police who are proactive in investigating acts of anti-Islamic hate speech and actions have been shown to garner support by the community, and in turn led to members of the community reaching out to them when they see disturbing signs.

Some police departments have created special units for engagement with a particular community, such as LAPD, a great case study:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/07/us/lapd-deputy-chief-muslims.html>
- <http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2015/11/16/lapd-counts-on-local-muslim-community-to-help-avert-terror-attacks/>
- http://www.lapdonline.org/community_forums/content_basic_view/38008
- <http://shq.lasdnews.net/pages/patrolstation.aspx?id=MCA>